

Gulf of Mexico Program Report

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Project Highlight: Seagrass Management Symposium

The objective of the Tampa Bay Seagrass Management Workshop was to develop a Plan of Study for further evaluation of issues other than nitrogen management, which may be impacting seagrass recovery in Tampa Bay. One of the primary recommendations of the workshop participants was the formation of a Seagrass Working Group, which was initiated immediately following the Workshop and now numbers over 50 coastal scientists and managers from Charlotte Harbor, Sarasota Bay and Tampa Bay. The Group meets approximately quarterly, and has initiated or finalized work on 16 of the 18 priority issues identified by the Workshop participants. Several lessons learned from the Workshop experience are listed below:

- Seagrass science and management issues along the Gulf Coast are of high interest to many coastal scientists and managers. Be prepared for at least 200 people for these issues, if advertised Gulf-wide. The room would not accommodate all of those interested in attending.
- Inviting "outside experts" to help summarize the emerging issues and gaps in knowledge was extremely helpful in identifying priority next steps (one of the objectives of the Workshop). Perspectives from other parts of the country (Chesapeake Bay, North Carolina, New Hampshire) were also found to be extremely helpful in the discussions.
- The development of a prioritized list of issues and gaps in seagrass management by the recognized scientists and managers at the workshop has probably been one of the most influential tools used by the Tampa Bay management community to help identify next steps and cooperative funding opportunities.
- If a peer review is considered for a Proceedings document, anticipate at least nine to twelve additional months for the review and revision process, once the initial papers are received.

The Proceedings are now available on the Tampa Bay Estuary Program website at: <http://www.tbep.org>.

Comprehensive Meeting Highlights

The GMP Comprehensive Meeting for the Focus Teams and Operational Committees was held in New Orleans on June 12-13, 2002. At the plenary session, a review of the recommendations from the Management Committee's Ad Hoc Workgroup on GMP Performance was presented and discussed. One of the feature recommendations of the Workgroup was that the GMP should shift from standing teams and committees to "project teams." The proposal made at the meeting by GMPO is to retain the Focus Teams and Operational Committees as needed to maintain networking continuity and to use project teams to develop specific products or outputs requested by the Management Committee (MC). Project Teams may include members of the Focus Team whose area the project most closely coincides, members from other Focus Teams if it is a cross-cutting issue, and/or other participants such as technical experts identified by the Teams. Project needs that command this level of project management structure will be identified by the Focus Teams or by the MC, PRB, or GMPO.

Individual meetings were held by the four focus teams: Public Health,, Invasive Species, Habitat, and Nutrient Enrichment. In addition, the Communications Committee, Data Information, and Monitoring, Modeling and Research Operational Committees held meetings. Meeting summaries from the Focus Teams will be available on the website. <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo>. (Contact: Gloria Car, 228-688-2421)

Communications Committee Meeting Highlights

The Communications Committee met June 11, 2002, in New Orleans. Highlighted outcomes from the meeting include:

- Gulf Guardian Awards will be given out at the Nov. 5-7, 2002, Clean Gulf Conference being held at Moody Gardens in Galveston, Texas.
- The deadline for entering for 2003 awards will once again be April 15, 2003 and partners should begin seeking entries in January 2003. The application is being slightly re-worked and will be forwarded to all partners once complete.
- Clint Neimeyer of ADEM, and Terry Hines Smith will write a series of radio PSAs on the “One Gulf” campaign. Texas Farm Bureau volunteered to produce the PSAs. Andy Saenz, TNRCC, will translate and record the PSAs in Spanish. All CC members will work to distribute beginning in 2003.
- As a result of the meeting, a news/feature release on the “One Gulf” campaign was completed and sent to CC members and distributed to media Gulfwide during July 2002.

(Contact: Terry Hines Smith, 228-688-1159 or hine-smith.terry@epa.gov)

PRB Meeting Highlights

At its July 18, 2002 meeting, the GMP Policy Review Board (PRB) endorsed three important efforts underway. Strong support was expressed for establishing the Gulf of Mexico Program through an Executive Order (EO). Draft language for the EO was reviewed by the Policy Review Board and is now under review by all the Focus Teams and Support Committees for fine tuning. A revised draft will be presented to the Management Committee for their consideration at the October 8-9, 2002 meeting and a final recommendation will then be considered by the PRB at their meeting in early December. If the EO is endorsed by the PRB at that time, a final recommendation will be developed and sent to the Administrator of EPA in early 2003. (Contact: Jim Giattina, 228-688-1172 or giattina.jim@epa.gov)

The PRB also endorsed the Program moving forward on its efforts to coordinate with the five Gulf States recommendations for achieving consistent fish consumption advisories for mercury in marine fish. The PRB wanted to ensure that our efforts would result in recommendations that each State and Federal agency could consider in their respective decision processes for establishing public advisories. The Public Health Focus Team is leading efforts to form a Project Team to carry out this activity. (Contact: Fred Kopfler, 228-688-2712 or kopfler.fred@epa.gov)

Additionally, the PRB endorsed for final publication the *Critical Scientific Research Needs Assessment for the Gulf of Mexico Program*. This document describes key issues and scientific information gaps associated with those issues. Specific research needs are described in nine areas: invasive species, estuarine hypoxia, coastal hypoxia, harmful algal blooms, atmospheric deposition, emergent coastal wetlands, seagrasses, human pathogens, and toxic substances. After final editing, the document will be available over the GMPO website and a limited number of hard copies will be printed. (Contact: Melanie Magee, 228-688-1191 or magee.melanie@epa.gov)

Supplemental Testimony on the Ocean Commission Report

Mr. J.I. Palmer, Regional Administrator for the EPA Region IV Office and GMP Policy Review Board co-chair, provided follow-up comments to the Ocean Commission on the successes and challenges of the Gulf of Mexico Program. Being the principal venue for interagency, multi-state coordination on environmental issues for the

Gulf, it is hoped that the experiences of the GMP can provide valuable insights as the Ocean Commission develops recommendations for the President and Congress on ways to improve governance of our coastal and ocean resources. The full text of Mr. Palmer's remarks can be viewed at <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo>. (**Contact: Jim Giattina, 228-688-1172 or giattina.jim@epa.gov**)

Mark Your Calendars.

Aug. 14: Live radio broadcast on the Andre' show at WWL radio on the "One Gulf" campaign; show will be broadcast from the Beau Rivage Resort & Casino.

Aug. 20-21: MS Sound Nutrient Meeting, River House, Stennis Space Center, MS

Sept. 4-6: Alabama Water Resources Conference, Orange Beach, AL

Sept. 9-10: "When the Water Runs Dry" Symposium, New Orleans, LA

Oct. 8-9: Management Committee Meeting, New Orleans, LA

Oct. 24-25: Communications Committee Meeting, Tampa, FL, The Florida Aquarium

Nov. 6-7: Clean Gulf Conference, Moody Gardens, Galveston, TX - GG Awards to be Presented

Nov. 6-7: Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting, Bay St. Louis, MS

Early Dec: Tentative PRB Meeting

The Risk of Eating Raw Oysters: Advice for Persons with Liver Disease, Diabetes, or Weakened Immune Systems

Each year millions of Americans enjoy eating raw molluscan shellfish – especially oysters and clams. But if you have **liver disease, diabetes**, or a **weak immune system**, raw oysters or clams containing the bacteria ***Vibrio vulnificus*** can make you seriously ill. You can avoid illness simply by: 1) Eating only oysters or clams that have been thoroughly cooked; or 2) Eating raw oysters or clams only if they are treated and labeled "Processed to reduce *Vibrio vulnificus* to non-detectable levels." If you would like to receive the pamphlet entitled "***The Risk of Eating Raw Oysters***" contact Terry Hines Smith at 228-688-1159 or via email at hines-smith.terry@epa.gov. The pamphlet defines *Vibrio vulnificus*, tells you where it is found, describes those people at risk, looks at how you can avoid infection, and details the symptoms of infection. (**Contact: Tom Herrington, 228-688-7941**)

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